

10 August 1954

THE FOREIGN PUBLICATIONS PROCUREMENT PROGRAM

1. BACKGROUND

a. Under the Foreign Service Act of 1946, supplemented by Executive Order 10249, the Department of State is charged with the responsibility of procuring foreign publications for any agency of the government which requires them.

b. This responsibility is discharged in our embassies and legations abroad by "Publications Procurement Officers", (PPO's), who are staff members of the overseas missions, whose salaries are paid by the Department of State, and who receive direction from a designated officer in the Washington headquarters of the Department.

where no full-time PPO can be provided, the responsibility of publications procurement is assigned as a part-time duty to one of the regular reporting officers.

c. The work performed by the full-time PPO's has been of the greatest value to intelligence. These officers not only perform the routine duty of making the specific purchases ordered from Washington, but they also keep constantly abreast of the publishing and bookselling outlets in the areas to which they are accredited. Thus they have kept Washington informed as to what was available by forwarding hundreds of bibliographies, booksellers' catalogs, publishers' lists, and special reports on foreign library collections. They have also served the needs of the government by arranging official exchanges of publications between foreign and U.S. government libraries. Their prime value to intelligence has lain in their ability to select and purchase new publications in line with general requirements without waiting for specific orders; and to obtain publications of societies, associations, institutions, and political parties which are not generally available in the booktrade. Such services as these can be performed only by an officer who is on the spot, who devotes much time to the building up of his contacts, and who has a nose for the types of publications needed by intelligence. For the most part, therefore, these services cannot be provided save by full-time PPO's. The regular reporting officers, some of whom have part-time responsibility for procurement, are not able to devote enough time or energy to this phase of their duties to do more than act on specific requests from headquarters.

d. The PPO program was started in 1945 with the assignment of a single officer to London. Later in the same year officers were added in Paris, Berlin, and Rio de Janeiro. In 1946 Madrid, Moscow, and Rome were added; and in 1947 an officer was appointed in Cairo,

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bringing the total of full-time PPO's to eight. In 1948 the Rio de Janeiro post was closed, and in 1950 the Cairo post was replaced by one in New Delhi. After the Chinese communists came into power, and Chinese publications took on a new importance, an officer was appointed in Hong Kong in 1952.

e. In 1953, because of its sharply curtailed budget, the Department of State found itself incapable of maintaining the eight PPO's, and the posts in London, Rome and Madrid were abruptly closed. In each of these three posts a productive network of personal contacts - one which had taken several years to develop - dissolved overnight. The London PPO was fired after months of uncertainty by "Reduction-in-Force" procedures, the Madrid PPO was recalled to other duties in Washington, while the Rome PPO was transferred to New Delhi where his Italian knowledge and experience were of little value. (His predecessor in New Delhi was called back to Washington for other duties.)

f. Budget pressures also made it impossible for the Department of State to continue operating the headquarters staff in Washington which had handled all correspondence with the PPO's, and had catalogued and distributed the incoming books and periodicals. This staff of 14 people was accordingly dispersed,

A directive of the National Security Council, NSCID-16, had made the Director of Central Intelligence responsible for the "coordination" of foreign publications procurement in March of 1953;

2. PRESENT SITUATION

a. There are at present five full-time PPO's overseas, stationed in Moscow, Berlin, Paris, New Delhi, and Hong Kong, and they are doing good work. The part-time PPO's in some 26 other posts are probably doing as much as they can, but the pressure of their primary duties permits only two or three of them to do more than routine purchases in response to specific orders. The headquarters staff in Washington,

is providing adequate direction and guidance.

3. PRESENT NEEDS

a. The loss of the PPO in London was a serious one, as London is a focal point in the entire publishing world and it is possible to obtain there a great variety of books and periodicals which are scarcely to be found anywhere else. It is rich, also, in publications of institutes

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and political groups which seldom find their way to the bookdealers,

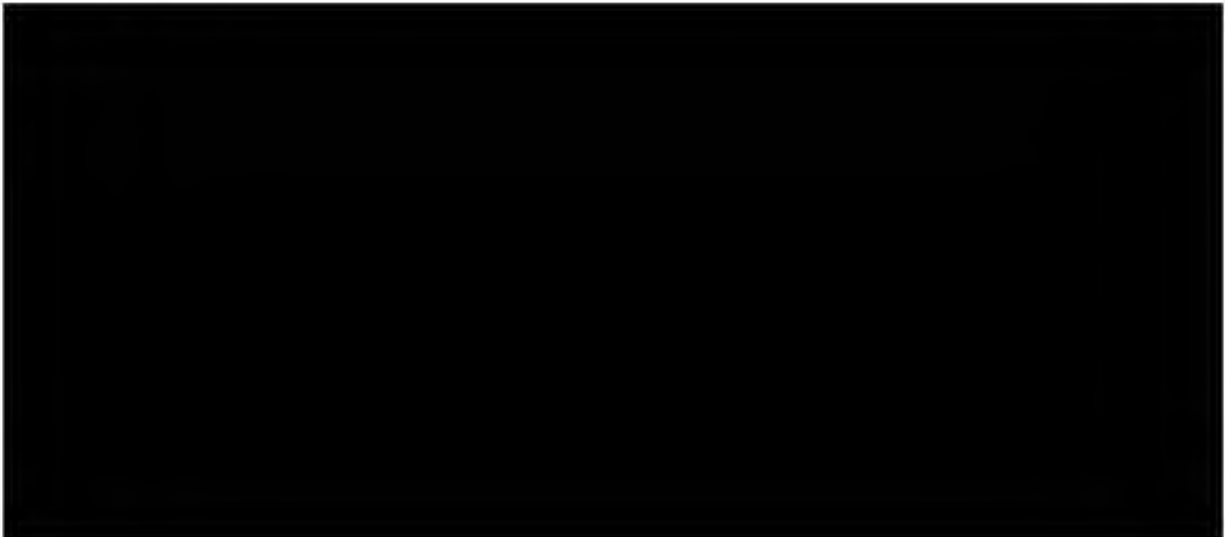
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[REDACTED] There is urgent need to reestablish the PPO post in London.

b. There is also urgent need for full-time PPO's in Cairo and Tokyo - the first to tap the Arab world and the entire Eastern Mediterranean, and the second to obtain Japanese, Chinese, and Korean publications which cannot be gotten from Hong Kong.

c. It also seems very likely that Chinese Communist publications, which are exceedingly hard to obtain, might well be found in Rangoon and Djakarta if a concentrated effort were made to do so. Such an effort would require the services of full-time PPO's in both places.

d. A more general requirement is that the whole PPO program be put on a sounder and more substantial basis - one which will ensure that before a PPO is brought home from his post a qualified replacement is sent out to take over his contact network and make certain that the work of many years is not thrown out the window. (For eighteen months we were without any PPO in Moscow! The present PPO in Hong Kong has just arrived there one month after the departure of his predecessor, and he finds himself without any on-the-spot guidance whatsoever.)



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